THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINDO KHANNA): (a) No Agreements were signed during the State visit of Rashtrapatiji to UAE.

(b) and (c) A bilateral Extradition Treaty, a Mutual Legal Assitance Treaty in Criminal Matters and Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty on Civil Matters signed on October 25, 1999, came into froce on May 29, 2000 upon the exchange the Instruments of Ratification. No specific bilateral agreement on Information Technology has been sigend.

Open Sky Offer to Asean

1775. DR. VIJAY MALLYA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the "open sky" offer made to the ASEAN following the agreement of CEC recently signed by the Prime Minister with ASEAN at Bali, Indonesia;

(b) what are the benefits likely to accrue to India;

(c) whether any action is being contemplated to enter into similar agreement with SAARC countries; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) Designated Airlines of ASEAN countries have been offered daily flights to the four metropolitan cities of India, namely Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata and unlimited flights to 18 other designated tourist destinations in India.

(b) Increased air connectivity is conducive in promoting trade, tourism and people-to-people contacts.

(c) and (d) No similiar agreement for SAARC countries is under consideration at present. However, India has offered daily air services to the Designated Airlines of Sri Lanka between Colombo and Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Kolkata. Unlimited access is also available to the Designated Airlines of Sri Lanka to and from the 18 tourist destinations in India. Commercial agreements between the Designated Airlines of the two countries for asymmetrical operations have

also been done away with. Private Scheduled Airlines of India which operate only in the domestic sector at present, have been encouraged to extend their operations to airports in Sir Lanka.

Safety of Indian tourists in Nepal

1776. SHRI RUMANDLA RAAMACHANDRAYYA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a bus of tourists from India in Nepal was set ablaze;

(b) if so, whether there was any loss of human life;

(c) what steps Government are taking to ensure safety of Indian tourists going to Nepal; and

(d) the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No human lives were lost in the incident; the passengers were asked to get down from the bus, before the bus was set on fire.

(c) and (d) Whenever any issue relating to safety and security of Indian nationals residing in or visiting Nepal is brought to the notice of the Government, it is taken up with the concerned authorities of His Majesty's Government of Nepal, whose response in such cases is positive. In the instant case, the matter was taken up with the police authorities of Nepal, who have registered a case.

Pak charges against India

1777. DR. AKHILESH DAS:
SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the letters, lately addressed by Pakistan to the UN General Assembly and the Security Council, charging India with adopting 'coercive means', and urging them to bring press to bear on Government of India to start a composite Indo-Pak dialogue and to agree on a ceasefire on the Line of Control; and